

ARTICLE APPEARED  
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27 February 1984**JACK ANDERSON****CIA No Longer  
Well Informed  
About Kremlin**

The press has reported, quite correctly, that U.S. intelligence was caught asleep at the switch by the death of Kremlin leader Yuri V. Andropov and his replacement by Konstantin U. Chernenko.

An insider admitted to me that the CIA wasn't sure whether Andropov was dead or alive during his last days. The first signs of his passing were noticed by The Washington Post's Moscow correspondent, Dusko Doder. The Post alerted U.S. government officials several hours before the first intelligence sightings reached Washington.

After Chernenko had already been anointed, the CIA's Kremlinologists were still predicting that Mikhail Gorbachev would be the new Soviet leader. Not until Chernenko appeared as head of the funeral commission did the CIA conclude that he had emerged as chief comrade. He had been a low fourth on its list of likely prospects.

How could America's multibillion-dollar intelligence apparatus be scooped by a lone journalist? Does this mean our intelligence system can't be relied upon to monitor the

decisions and actions of the Soviet leadership?

In search of the answers, I examined more than 50 classified documents, ranging from "Confidential" to "Top Secret Umbra." I also consulted top CIA officials, both past and present.

They concede that the CIA has no direct pipelines into the Politburo and few informants behind the grim, fortress-like walls of the Kremlin. They blame this on former president Jimmy Carter, who virtually wiped out the CIA's human-intelligence network within the Soviet Union.

One insider, trying to explain Carter's action, suggested that he probably believed "high-tech intelligence had made old-fashioned intelligence obsolete." Another source just shrugged and said: "I think Carter felt this kind of espionage was immoral."

Yet despite its blind spots, the United States has the best technological intelligence in the world. U.S. agencies can intercept messages, break codes, monitor conversations and photograph just about everything that appears on the Soviet surface. Some photographs are detailed enough to identify a bolt in a Soviet tank.

Because the old men of the Kremlin have been in power for decades, the CIA has also had time to investigate their backgrounds and analyze their behavior thoroughly. The CIA

computers can summon up detailed information about any Soviet leader. The agency has been able to diagnose their health, for example, with uncanny accuracy.

Last July—long before the world had any inkling that Andropov was seriously ill—I was able to write: "Andropov's days are numbered, and he knows it. My CIA sources are betting that he will die within a year. That's how bad his health is . . . Andropov's tenure as top man in the Kremlin could be the shortest in Soviet history."

Classified CIA reports, which described Andropov down to the missing part of his right eyebrow, warned that he would be "a formidable adversary," skilled in political intrigue, perfectly willing to use violence and terror, dedicated to Marxist dogma, "ruthless," and "cunning."

In contrast, top-secret reports describe Chernenko as a master bureaucrat, skilled at "handling paper work." Unlike Andropov, who sought to put his own stamp on the Politburo, Chernenko is expected to function more as "chairman of the board." In the words of the CIA, he'll be "responsible for seeing to it that Politburo decisions are carried out—that is, as the top civil servant of the Politburo, not as its master."

Given his advanced age and frail health (he's 72 and is reported to have emphysema), Chernenko will be another interim leader.